

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2007

Secretary Mike Johanns
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns,

We are writing to express our opposition to the current effort to close USDA - Farm Service Agency offices in five Colorado counties. As members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and the House Committee on Agriculture we are dedicated to ensuring that Colorado's farmers and ranchers have adequate access to the programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The mission of FSA is to equitably serve all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs. These programs play a critical role in the economic survival of Colorado's rural communities and the county FSA offices are a local source of pride and economic activity. Because of this, the United States Congress has established guidelines that govern the process by which the Department of Agriculture can propose the closure of any local or county FSA office. House Report 109-255 clearly states:

"That none of the funds made available by this Act may be used to pay the salaries or expenses of any officer or employee of the Department of Agriculture to close any local or county office of the Farm Service Agency unless the Secretary of Agriculture, not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary proposed the closure, holds a public meeting about the proposed closure in the county in which the local or county office is located, and, after the public meeting but not later than 120 days before the date on which the Secretary approves the closure, notifies the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, and the members of Congress from the State in which the local or county office is located of the proposed closure."

We understand that Colorado FSA has scheduled public meetings and we encourage you to seriously consider the opposition you will hear at these meetings and withdraw the proposed closures. Many of those who would be affected by closures have indicated that they are concerned with the process thus far including a weak rationale for the closures, and the feeling that input from local county committees has not been taken into account.

Without local support or understanding we will continue to oppose these closures including taking legislative action to delay or halt the closures.

We request that you keep us informed of any developments.

Sincerely,


Ken Salazar
United States Senator


John Salazar
United States Representative

Cc: Teresa Lasseter, Administrator, USDA Farm Service Agency
Lewis Frank, Colorado State Director, USDA Farm Service Agency